

SEND EVANGELICAL CHURCH

SAFEGUARDING POLICY



October 2024

Introduction

This is the safeguarding policy of Send Evangelical Church, Broadmead Road, Woking (hereafter called “the Church”). This policy document contains appendices which are primarily for guidance and use by those involved in implementing the Church’s work with children and vulnerable adults.

Church Statement

The pastor, elders and deacons (hereafter known as “Church trustees”) and members of the Church fully recognise their responsibility to protect and safeguard the welfare of children and young people (i.e. all those under the age of 18, hereafter referred to as children) and vulnerable adults (those with additional care and support needs) entrusted to the Church’s care. Those who work with children and vulnerable adults must always ensure that every possible precaution is taken to avoid any situations which might lead to children or vulnerable adults being subjected to abuse. We also believe that all allegations of abuse must be taken seriously and treated in accordance with local child protection procedures.

The Church is committed to:

- Providing a safe environment for all children and vulnerable adults who attend.
- Ensuring that every child/vulnerable adult is valued and safe. We want to make sure that the children and vulnerable adults we have contact with know this and are empowered to tell us if they are suffering harm.
- Treating all children and vulnerable adults with respect, listening to them and protecting them from all forms of abuse.
- Enabling all adults to enjoy and have access to every aspect of the life of the Church unless they pose a risk to the safety of others we serve.
- Exercising proper care in the appointment and selection of all those who will work with children and vulnerable adults.
- Ensuring that all Church members involved in ministries with children and vulnerable adults are given support and training in their roles.
- Encouraging and supporting parents and carers.

- Having a clearly defined system for dealing with reported concerns about possible abuse.
- Keeping a copy of the Safeguarding Policy on the Church premises, which is available at all times (in the church office).

How do we ensure children and vulnerable adults, and workers, are protected to the best of the Church's ability?

Appointment of workers with children and vulnerable adults (both voluntary and paid, hereafter referred to as 'workers')

In appointing such workers, the Church will adopt the following approach:

- All prospective workers must be members of the Church. All new members are interviewed by the Church Elders.
- Within the interview process references from the previous Church will be requested.
- All prospective workers will be asked to undergo DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) checks, which should be repeated every 3 years.
- Any workers appointed will be given Safeguarding training and asked to support and follow the guidelines set in the Church's Safeguarding guidance.
- As part of the training all prospective workers will be made aware of the signs of abuse (see appendix A).

What are the practical issues and boundaries?

The following procedures and advice are put in place for all workers

- At no time should any Church member be alone with children or vulnerable adults on Church premises unless with parent or carer's agreement.
- Implement a 2-adult rule during all activities with children.
- Ensure the appropriate ratio of adults to children is met. As a guide, it might be helpful to consider the ratios required in regulations governing day care for under 8's. These are:

Age	Adults : Children
0 to 2 years	1:3
2 to 3 years	1:4
3 to 8 years	1:8

- *NB. These are suggested figures – it may not be possible, in practice, to achieve the same standards as given above but leaders must always ensure that sufficient adult helpers are present for child supervision. It should also be noted that during Little Lambs Toddlers, these ratios do not apply as parents remain responsible for their own children.*
- Under 18's wanting to participate in activities with children and vulnerable adults (such as Holiday Bible Club) must be the child of a Church member. Any students who are not members themselves, but are children of Church members, are welcome to help at Church activities as long as a DBS check has been carried out.
- Be clear about when the Church and its workers have responsibility for the children and when the children are under the care of the parents or carers. For example, during Sunday school the Church has responsibility for the children in its care, but once the activity has finished and the main service is over the children are the responsibility of their parents.
- Subject to the next section on children and vulnerable adults with special needs, parents take responsibility for taking their children to the toilets (if they require assistance) at all times.
- A register of children attending a club or activity should be kept along with a register of helpers. This should include times of arrival and departure if any individual is not attending the whole session, and any others in the building at the time.
- Arrangements for transporting children must meet with the approval of parents or carers and with the knowledge of the team. As a Church we are responsible for children during Church activities. Arrangements for transporting children are private arrangements.
- Ensure that the only people allowed into a children's activity are the helpers assigned to that group. Parents are welcome to help children settle at an activity but do not count towards the 2-adult rule. Parents/Carers attending Little Lambs toddler group are expected to stay for the entire session.

Do these practical issues and boundaries apply to children or vulnerable adults with Special Needs?

Children with special needs will often require more help with personal care needs such as washing, dressing, toileting, feeding, mobility etc and may have limited understanding and communication abilities.

For example, a young person of 17 might behave in a manner more akin to a 2 or 3-year-old, particularly in demanding cuddles or sitting on a carer's lap. Others might be more vulnerable because they are blind or deaf and can be reliant on physical contact for communication.

In these situations, plans will be created on a case by case basis in consultation with the parents or carers.

What are the guidelines for touching?

Below are guidelines on touch for those who work with children or vulnerable adults.

- Keep everything public. A hug in the context of a group is very different from a hug behind closed doors.
- Touch should be related to the child's needs, not the worker's.
- Touch should be age-appropriate and generally initiated by the child rather than the worker.
- Children and vulnerable adults have the right to decide how much physical contact they have with others, except in exceptional circumstances when they need medical attention.
- Team members should monitor one another in the area of physical contact. They should be free to help each other by pointing out anything which could be misunderstood. Concerns about abuse should always be reported.

What about when unaccompanied children attend activities?

Sometimes children playing outside or near the Church with no adult supervision will join in Church organised activities (e.g. children's clubs, Sunday school) without the knowledge of their parents. We recommend the following:

- On arrival, welcome the child/children and attempt to gain some factual information about them, i.e. name, age, where they live, telephone number, and record in a register.
- Enquire if the child's parents are aware of where they are, and whether they are expected home at any particular time. If they are and this is before the end of your group you would, of course, encourage the child to return home, suggesting that their parent might be willing for them to come to the group the following week (or ring to check with parents that it's OK for them to stay).
- Link the child to another child to introduce the visitor to the group and the routines etc.
- On leaving, give the child a leaflet about the group with contact telephone numbers etc with perhaps a standard letter to parents inviting them to make contact if they wish.

Accordingly, you will need to consider the following:

- Without quizzing the child, you will need to find out as soon as you can whether the child has any special needs, e.g. is the child on any medication, so that you can respond appropriately in any emergency.

How are workers supported/supervised?

The areas which need to be considered include the following:

- Encouraging teamwork and mutual accountability.
- Anyone seeing another worker acting in a way which could be misinterpreted should feel able to speak to the individual or the leader about the concern.
- Leaders should arrange regular meetings with their team to review procedures to ensure common approach, sharing of concerns and identifying other matters which may need clarification and guidance.
- A written record of issues/decisions discussed at meetings should be kept.

What are the guidelines for contacting children?

All contact needed regarding any church activities will be made via parents/carers not directly with the young people. No social media or Whats App groups are permitted.

What are the guidelines for discipline?

- NEVER smack or hit a child and don't shout excessively – change voice tone if necessary.
- Lay down ground rules e.g. no swearing, name-calling, respect for property etc. Ensure that the children understand what action will be taken if these rules are not kept.
- Each child is unique and individual, and often needs a unique approach with regard to any unacceptable behaviour. We need to start by asking why a child is behaving unacceptably.
- Separate children who tend to be disruptive when together. Warn them first and separate them as a last resort if they are disruptive.
- Take any disruptive child aside and talk to them, challenging them to change, whilst encouraging them with regard to their positive behaviours.

- Be consistent in what you say and ensure that other team members know what you have said – this avoids manipulation by the child.

What is the Church's guidance when known sex offenders attend the Church?

If someone who is known to have committed any sexual offences involving children or adults starts attending the Church services, then, whilst extending friendship to the individual, the Church trustees in their commitment to the protection of all children will meet with the individual and discuss the following boundaries that the person will be expected to keep.

The Gospel is for all and forgiveness is available to those who committed such offences, but in order to protect the offender from temptation and to protect children under our care the following rules will be observed.

A contract will be drawn up by the Church and signed by the offender. The items to be covered are:

- A designated Church member will shadow the offender at all times on Church premises.
- Contact with the Police will be made to find out the terms of probation if needed.
- Parents of regular children attending Church and Church activities will be informed if the offender continues to visit.
- The offender will be permanently barred from all work with children and vulnerable adults.

How do we deal with allegations of abuse?

All allegations must be reported as soon as possible to Laura Gilkerson (the safeguarding officer) or Faye Nel (deputy safeguarding officer) at safeguarding@sendec.org. They have been nominated by the Church trustees to act on their behalf in referring these to the statutory authorities.

All Children's/Youth workers will have received Safeguarding training before participating in any Church activities and will therefore be aware of some of the signs of abuse (see appendix A). Should a child/young person or vulnerable adult confide in a Children's/youth worker they are expected to follow the procedures listed below.

- Never promise to keep a secret – even if you feel a child won't confide in you without this guarantee.
- Listen.

- Don't rush the victim or ask leading questions.
- Don't jump to conclusions without checking the facts.
- Write up the conversation immediately and date it.
- Notify the designated Safeguarding officer. The Safeguarding officer will then make contact with necessary authorities.
- All allegations or concerns are confidential and must only be discussed with designated officers within the Church.
- Ensure the immediate safety of a child, young person or vulnerable adult.

What about when an allegation is made against a Children's worker/ Church officer?

If an allegation is made against a Church worker or officer then the report should be directed to the Safeguarding officer. If the Safeguarding officer is implicated, then the Deputy officer is notified. Should both officers be reported then one of the Church trustees must be informed.

If there is an urgent concern, contact the Police or Social Services. You can contact 31:8 (previously CCPAS or Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service) directly if advice needed immediately. The contact details for 31:8 are:

31:8, PO Box 133, Swanley, Kent, BR8 7UQ.

Telephone 0845 120 4551 or 0845 120 4550.

Once an allegation has been made the procedures in the previous section are followed and point of contact will depend on the person against whom the allegation has been made.

As a Church how do we support the victim and their family?

If a child confides in us about an abusive situation not committed by a Church member or on Church premises, then as a Church we should respond wisely in our support of the victim and their family. If appropriate, we can:

- Care for the victim and the family by providing spiritual, practical and emotional support.
- Listen to the family needs and share/apply the gospel. In time, encourage forgiveness. Pray with them.
- Set up a point of contact between the Church and the family – someone to keep in regular contact with the family.

- Communication with the Church, if appropriate, will be at the discretion of the Safeguarding officer and Church trustees.

Appendix A - Definitions of Abuse

The definitions of child abuse recommended as criteria throughout England and Wales by the Department of Health, Department for Education and Employment and the Home Office in their joint document, Working Together to Safeguard Children (1999) are as follows. Note that a child may suffer more than one category of abuse.

Abuse and Neglect

Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting; by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes ill health to a child whom they are looking after. This situation is commonly described using terms such as factitious illness by proxy or Munchausen syndrome by proxy*.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. It may involve causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill-treatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (e.g. rape or buggery) or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Organised Abuse

Organised or multiple abuse may be defined as abuse involving one or more abuser and a number of related or non-related abused children and young people. The abusers concerned may be acting in concert to abuse children, sometimes acting in isolation, or may be using an institutional framework or position of authority to recruit children for abuse. Organised or multiple abuse may be defined as abuse involving one or more abuser and a number of related or non-related abused children and young people. The abusers concerned may be acting in concert to abuse children, sometimes acting in isolation, or may be using an institutional framework or position of authority to recruit children for abuse. Organised and multiple abuse occur both as part of a network of abuse across a family or community, and within institutions such as residential homes or schools.

*Munchausen's Syndrome by proxy

The Oxford Textbook of Psychiatry defines Munchausen's Syndrome by proxy as: *"A form of child abuse in which the parents, or carers, give false accounts of symptoms in their children and may fake signs of illness (to draw attention to themselves). They seek repeated medical investigations and needless treatment for their children."*

Appendix B - Recognising Abuse

The following signs may or may not be indicators that abuse has taken place, but the possibility should be considered.

Physical signs of abuse

- Any injuries not consistent with the explanation given for them
- Injuries which occur to the body in places which are not normally exposed to falls, rough games, etc
- Injuries which have not received medical attention
- Neglect – under nourishment, failure to grow, constant hunger, stealing or gorging food, untreated illnesses, inadequate care, etc
- Reluctance to change for, or participate in, games or swimming
- Repeated urinary infections or unexplained tummy pains
- Bruises, bites, burns, fractures etc which do not have an accidental explanation
- Cuts/scratches/substance abuse

Indicators of possible sexual abuse

- Any allegations made by a child concerning sexual abuse
- Child with excessive preoccupation with sexual matters and detailed knowledge of adult sexual behaviour, or who regularly engages in age-inappropriate sexual play
- Sexual activity through words, play or drawing
- Child who is sexually provocative or seductive with adults
- Inappropriate bed-sharing arrangements at home
- Severe sleep disturbances with fears, phobias, vivid dreams or nightmares, sometimes with overt or veiled sexual connotations
- Eating disorders – anorexia, bulimia

Emotional signs of abuse

- Changes or regression in mood or behaviour, particularly where a child withdraws or becomes clinging. Also depression/aggression, extreme anxiety.
- Nervousness, frozen watchfulness
- Obsessions or phobias
- Sudden under-achievement or lack of concentration
- Inappropriate relationships with peers and/or adults
- Attention-seeking behaviour
- Persistent tiredness
- Running away/stealing/lying

Signatures

Signed by: _____ (Kevin Rhoades)

_____ (Ian Mair)

_____ (Steven Gilkerson)

_____ (Graham Brown)

_____ (Clive Woodland)

_____ (Jonathan Nel)

_____ (Christopher Couvaras)

Date: _____